CALIFORNIA MARINE WATERS AREAS OF SPECIAL BIOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE

RECONNAISSANCE SURVEY REPORT

IRVINE COAST MARINE LIFE REFUGE ORANGE COUNTY

STATE WATER RESOURCES CONTROL BOARD DIVISION OF PLANNING AND RESEARCH SURVEILLANCE AND MONITORING SECTION

MARCH, 1979

WATER QUALITY MONITORING REPORT 79-3

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This State Water Resources Control Board Report is based on a Reconnaissance Survey Report submitted by Richard C. Brusca and Richard Zimmerman of the University of Southern California in June, 1978. The latter report was prepared in fulfillment of an agreement with the California Department of Fish and Game. The Department of Fish and Game coordinated the preparation of a series of Area of Special Biological Significance Survey Reports for the Board under an Interagency Agreement.

ABSTRACT

Irvine Coast Marine Life Refuge Area of Special Biological Significance (ASBS) includes the nearshore waters adjacent to approximately 3 miles of beach from southern Corona del Mar to Abalone Point, Orange County. The area is located within the approximate coordinates 33° 33' 20" to 33° 35' 05" N LAT and 117° 49' to 117° 51' 55" W LONG.

The long, clean sandy beach, interspersed with a few rocky outcroppings, is fronted by high coastal bluffs of sandstone, which are vegetated with native coastal sage scrub and a few introduced plant species.

The coastline is unprotected from the southwesterly swells that are at times quite heavy. A consistent surf of at least two to three feet makes water access difficult and sometimes hazardous. The water mass is well mixed with turbid conditions primarily dependent on surge and wave action. Water termperature varies seasonally, with the surf approaching 70° F in the summer and rarely dropping below 60° F in the winter. Offshore currents generally flow southeasterly during the winter and spring and northwesterly during summer and fall.

The intertidal substrate consists of coarse sand beaches and surf-washed rocks. Beach areas are inhabitated by sand crabs, isopods and talitrid amphipods. Shorebirds such as the marbled godwits and black bellied plovers forage the area. Rocky tidepool areas contain the typical fauna assemblages including: mussel, anemone, brown algae, starfish, polychaetes, urchins, surf grass, limpets, and the striped shore crab.

The subtidal substrate is fine silty sands in water depths greater than 30 feet (9 m) and coarse sands and shell fragments in shallower water. A wide variety of benthic organisms are found in this area. Small rocky reefs occur throughout the ASBS, some supporting small stands of giant kelp and a diverse assemblage of associated biota.

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FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

FINDINGS

- 1. The intertidal zone is predominately sandy beach with a few rocky outcroppings and supports rich and diverse plant and animal communities.
- 2. The subtidal area is sandy benthos with numerous small rocky reefs, also supporting rich and healthy biota.
- 3. A variety of recreational uses are made of the area; however, limited access restricts some public use.

CONCLUSIONS

- 1. Land use and development in the watershed adjoining the ASBS poses one potential water quality threat due to increased storm drain discharge and erosion.
- 2. Cycling of Newport Bay outflow downcoast into the ASBS constitutes a second potential water quality problem due to the uncertain quality of the bay's water.
- 3. Irvine Coast MLR must be considered as presently one of the most biologically healthy regions of the Southern California coast.

INTRODUCTION

The California State Water Resources Control Board, under its Resolution No. 74-28, designated certain Areas of Special Biological Significance (ASBS) in the adoption of water quality control plans for the control of wastes discharged to ocean waters. The ASBS are intended to afford special protection to marine life through prohibition of waste discharges within these areas. The concept of "special biological significance" recognizes that certain biological communities, because of their value or fragility, deserve very special protection that consists of preservation and maintenance of natural water quality conditions to practicable extents (from State Water Resources Control Board's and California Regional Water Quality Control Boards' Administrative Procedures, September 24, 1970, Section XI. Miscellaneous—Revision 7, September 1, 1972).

Specifically, the following restrictions apply to ASBS in the implementation of this policy:

- 1. Discharge of elevated temperature wastes in a manner that would alter natural water quality conditions is prohibited.
- 2. Discharge of discrete point source sewage or industrial process wastes in a manner that would alter natural water quality conditions is prohibited.
- 3. Discharge of wastes from nonpoint sources, including but not limited to storm water runoff, silt and urban runoff, will be controlled to the extent practicable. In control programs for wastes from nonpoint sources, Regional Boards will give high priority to areas tributary to ASBS.
- 4. The Ocean Plan, and hence the designation of Areas of Special Biological Significance, is not applicable to vessel wastes, the control of dredging, or the disposal of dredging spoil.

In order for the State Water Resources Control Board to evaluate the status of protection of Irvine Coast Marine Life Refuge ASBS, a reconnaissance survey integrating existing knowledge and additional field study information was performed by Richard C. Brusca and Richard Zimmerman of the University of Southern California. This survey report was one of a series prepared for the Board under the direction of the California Department of Fish and Game and provided the information for preparation of this document.

ORGANIZATION OF SURVEY

The area was studied by both shore observations and numerous SCUBA diving operations between January and June, 1978. Careful records of the organisms observed were maintained. Sandy subtidal regions were surveyed by a team of divers swimming transects from the 85 foot (26 m) isobath perpendicular to the beach to the 20 foot (6 m) isobath. Rocky subtidal areas were surveyed by teams of divers swimming over each reef, recording all common organisms observed, and collecting those not readily identifiable by sight for identification by specialists. Photographs were taken of general habitat types and common species assemblages. Temperature, surge and water clarity (secchi disk) were measured on each outing.

Intertidal regions were surveyed during periods of extreme low tide on 22 January, 20 February, and 13 May, 1978. Records of all organisms seen from the highest tide mark to the low water mark were made. Each habitat type was recorded. The shoreline was investigated for access routes, erosion, coastal vegetation, storm drainages and terrestrial wildlife. Bird species present were recorded. Photographs of the predominant habitats and their organisms were taken and are archived at the State Water Resources Control Board.

During all field work, observations were continuously made for poaching or fishing in the Refuge. Counts of divers and beach-goers were also made, as well as observations of use by SCUBA divers, horse-riders and off-road vehicles.

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

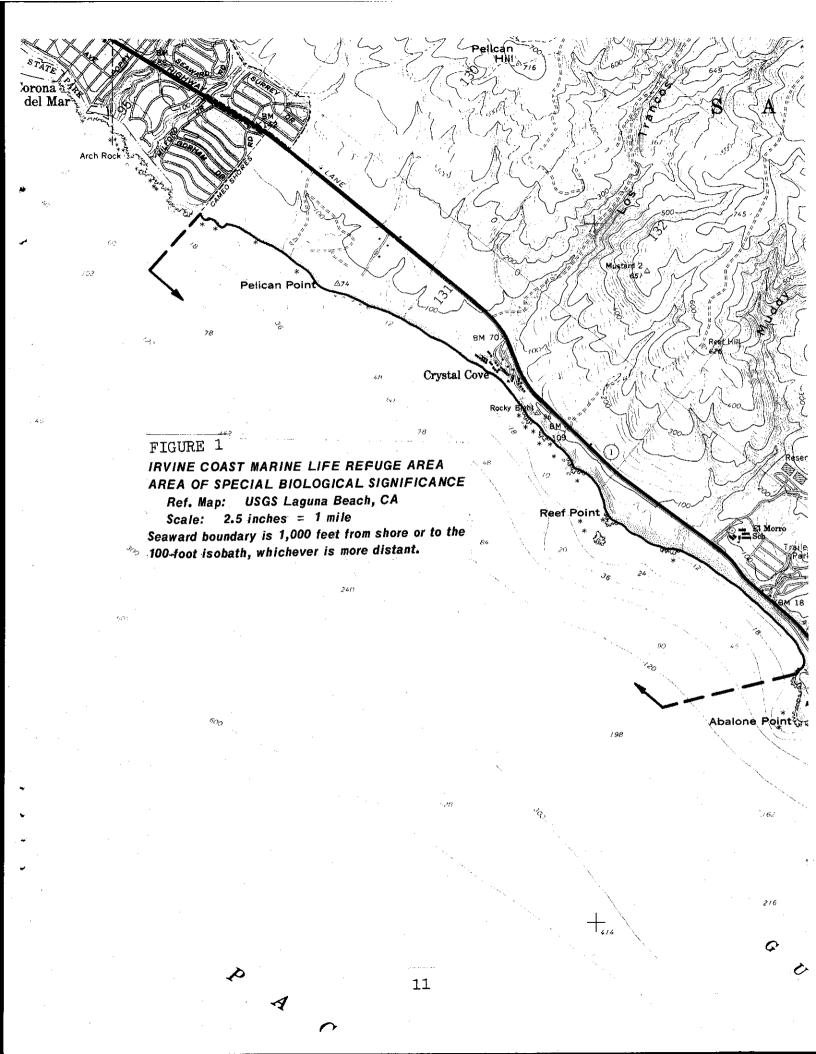
Location and Size

The Irvine Coast Marine Life Refuge ASBS encompasses the nearshore waters between the southern border of Corona del Mar and Abalone Point, Orange County (Fig. 1). These waters border approximately 3 mi (4.8 km) of coast and comprise about 1.6 sq. mi. (414 ha). Boundaries of the ASBS are contained within the approximate map coordinates 33° 33' 20" to 33° 35' 05" N LAT and 117° 49' to 117° 51' 55" W LONG. The official boundary description, as stated in the State Water Resources Control Board publication Areas of Special Biological Significance (1976), is as follows:

"Ocean waters within that portion of California State tide and submerged lands adjoining the Newport Beach Marine Life Refuge bounded by a line beginning at the intersection of the southwesterly extension of Lot 141, Tract No. 3357, as shown on a map recorded in Book 107, Page 1 of Miscellaneous Maps on file in the office of the County Recorder, Orange County and the line of ordinary high tide; thence, southeasterly along the line of ordinary high tide approximately 20,000 feet to its intersection with the southwesterly extension of the northwesterly boundary line of the City of Laguna Beach; thence, southwesterly along such southwesterly extension 1.000 feet or to the 100-foot isobath, whichever distance from shore is greater; thence northwesterly along a line parallel to and 1,000 feet or to the 100-foot isobath, whichever distance from shore is greater southwesterly of the line of ordinary high tide to the southwesterly extension of said Lot 141; thence northeasterly along such southwesterly extension to the point of beginning."

Nearshore Waters

The entire coastline is unprotected from the southwesterly swells that are, at times, quite heavy. There is a consistent 2-3 foot surf that makes launching of boats and entry by divers difficult at best and extremely hazardous on days of very heavy surf.



The lack of hydrogen sulfide stains in this region indicates that the water mass is well mixed and well oxygenated. This is probably a result of the open exposure and chronic moderate to heavy surf conditions that prevail.

Turbidity of the water is primarily a function of surge and wave action, although it does follow a seasonal cycle, increasing in the winter and spring as a result of increased phytoplankton productivity (due in part to the upwelling of nutrient rich waters at this time of the year).

Water temperatures vary seasonally. In the summer, surf temperatures usually approach 70°F; winter temperatures rarely drop below 60°F. Subtidally, the water is generally several degrees colder, ranging from a low of 55°F in the winter to 65°F in summer and early autum. A shallow summer thermocline usually exists. The actual location of the thermocline in the water column is highly variable and is a function of (1) storm mixing, (2) turbidity, (3) convective stirring during cooling periods, and (4) convergence and divergence caused by wind patterns (Cairns and LaFond, 1966). The depth of the thermocline is generally less than 30 feet (9 m); it is usually abolished by October or mid-November. Table 1 indicates the variability in temperature and turbidity observed during the course of this study.

Studies of the current patterns by Jones (1971) indicate that a generally southeasterly flowing current occurs offshore during the winter and spring. This current often reverses itself during summer and autum months. Current velocities, on the order of 5-10 cm/sec, are highly variable. Nearshore current patterns have not been extensively studied and are complicated by wind and tidal factors. Jones concludes that "most studies of nearshore current patterns are too limited in time and synoptic observations of winds and currents to be useful in determining the various causes of nearshore circulation or in stating its general nature."

Table 1: Water Temperatures and Turbidity at Irvine Coast Marine Life Refuge

	Date	Water Temp (^O F)	Extinction (Secchi Depth)
22	January	55–56	-
20	February	_	3 m
30	April	56-60	13 m
7	May	64–56	10 m
13	May	68	-

BIOLOGICAL DESCRIPTION

<u>Subtidal Biota</u>

A typical soft bottom community is found in areas deeper than 65 feet (20 m). Organisms observed in the area include sea pens Ptilosarcus and Stylatula, razor clams, Ensis myrae, sand stars Astropectin armatus, and moon sails Polinices sp. The bottom is smooth and shows little evidence of pitting or burrowing as a result of the activity by organisms such as ghost shrimps or rays. As one proceeds from the 20 m isobath into shallower regions, the sediment becomes a bit coarser and tube worms Diopatra sp. and olive shells, (Olivella biplicata, become common. A few small sand dollars, Dendraster, were observed at the south end of the reserve, near Abalone Point, but there was no evidence of any extensive beds. No other live sand dollars were observed and there were no remnants or broken tests to indicate that there had been sizeable populations in the recent past.

Small rocky reefs are scattered throughout the reserve and range in depths from 50 feet (16 m) to the intertidal zone. Giant kelp, Macrocystis pyrifera, are present although they do not form large beds, due to the small size of the scattered reefs that they utilize as substrate.

Smaller brown algae (Phaeophyta) and a branched and coralline red algae (Rhodophyta) are extremely common on the reefs, which are covered with luxuriant growths of invertebrates such as sponges, bryozoans, jewel box shells, Chama pellucida, rock scallops, Hinnites multirugosus, and ascidians. Abalone are present, although they are not extremely common. Most are smaller than the legal size limit. Sea urchins Strongylocentrotus purpuratus, S. franciscanus, and Centrostephanus coronatus are also present and are locally abundant on many rocky outcroppings. The reefs are also inhabited by such predatory invertebrates as the knobby starfish, Pisaster giganteus, nudibranchs, crabs, spiny lobsters

and octopuses. Fishes associated with the reefs include the 'convictfish', Oxylebius pictus, rockfish Sebastes spp., rock wrasse Halichoeres semicinctus, opaleye, Girella nigricans, and the garibaldi, Hypsypops rubicundus. Kelp bass are not extremely abundant, and most individuals are quite small. The plants inhabiting these reefs provide a habitat for bryozoans, small hydroids, polychaetes, grass shrimp Hippolyte clarki and numerous small crustaceans, particularly isopods (Idotea, Cirolana, various Sphaeromatidae), amphipods and mysids.

Intertidal Biota

The coarse sand beaches are inhabited by sand crabs, <u>Emerita analoga</u>. Talitid amphipods and flies are present and form dense aggregations around drift algae that have been stranded by the tide. Broken shells of <u>Donax gouldi</u>, <u>Tivela stultorum</u> and <u>Olivella biplicata</u> have been cast up from deeper regions. Marbled godwits and black bellied plovers forage along the beach. A California sea lion was seen in the surf zone.

Surf swept intertidal rocks support a fauna typical of that described by Ricketts, et al. (1968) for protected outer coasts. Wide bands of mussel beds, composed primarily of the mussel, Mytilus californianus, dominate much of the rocky mid-intertidal region. Low tidepools contain the anemone Anthopleura elegantissima, brown alga Eisenia arborea and many corralline algae, primarily Corallina vancouveriensis, along with many species of ophiuroids, molluscs, starfishes, crustaceans and small polychaetes. The purple sea urchin, Strongylocentrotus purpuratus, is common in the low tide region around Abalone Point but is not present on the other intertidal reefs in the Refuge. Surf grass, Phyllospadix torreyi, is common in the low intertidal zone as are the brown algae Egregia menziesii and Cystoseira sp. The upper intertidal zone contains limpets Collisella spp., barnacles Chthamalus fissus, Balanus sp., Tetraclita squamosa, and black turban snails, Tegula funebralis. The striped shore crab, Pachygrapsus crassipes, forages throughout the rocky intertidal zone. A complete list of the species observed during this study is given in Appendix 2.

<u>Landside Biota</u>

The tops of the bluffs fronting the entire reserve are covered by the coastal sage scrub vegetation community described by Munz (1974). Common shrubs include lemonadeberry, Rhus integrifolia, a bladderpod, introduced sunflowers Helianthus, and native daisies Encelia sp. Ice plant and sea rocket, Cabile, grow near the edge of the bluffs in which starlings nest. Ground squirrels, hummingbirds and insects, especially locusts and butterflies, are very common. Although a number of introduced plants grow in this area, most of the flora is native to the Southern California coastal region, evincing the relatively undisturbed nature of the area.

LAND AND WATER USE DESCRIPTIONS

Harvesting of marine life in the ASBS is controlled by special regulations imposed as a result of its marine life refuge designation (Section 10644, Fish and Game Code) as well as other sport and commercial fishing regulations. Commercial fishing for spiny lobster in or near the ASBS was observed, as was sport hook and line fishing from shore and boats. Other recreation activities associated with the area include water-contact sports, horseback riding and beach sports.

Land adjoining the ASBS is largely undeveloped, except for a large equestrian center and several small developments. Future development of the area is anticipated.

No scientific studies, other than the present report, were carried out within the Irvine Coast Marine Life Refuge during the period of this study, although research has been carried out in the past. ZoBell (1971) studied drift algae on the beaches along this coastline. The goboid fishes have been investigated by Wiley (1973, 1976), and Pequegnat (1963, 1964, 1968) studied several subtidal reefs located within the boundaries of the reserve. Jones and Fauchald (1976) studied the soft bottom macrofaunal communities in the deeper waters adjacent to the reserve. Mearns, et al. (1973) reported on an otter trawl survey of the central Orange County coast by the Southern California Coastal Water Research Project. They captured 47 species of fishes and concluded that the inshore coastal fishes of this region are both abundant and diverse. Their data indicate, as did this survey, that this region is biologically healthy, relatively undisturbed and free of any gross or observable water pollution.

ACTUAL OR POTENTIAL POLLUTION THREATS

Fresh water runoff from the surrounding hills enters the ASBS at a number of points. A small stream enters near Abalone Point, and several smaller seeps are fed by rain runoff from the land directly behind the bluffs. Although too small to represent an actual pollution threat, the runoff might carry enough nutrients to cause small problems in isolated spots. This is particularly true of the runoff water originating in the area of the equestrian center.

Water quality in the ASBS may be directly affected by changes in the water quality of Newport Bay. Tidal flushings brings Newport Bay out-flow directly into the waters of the ASBS. The proximity to Newport Bay may be considered the greatest water quality threat to the Irvine Coast ASBS at the present time. Future land development east of Pacific Coast Highway will eventually result in storm drainage to the ASBS. When this development ensues, much of the pristine Irvine Refuge Area may be threatened unless control measures are implemented.

Although the area affords no direct access to motor vehicles, R/V and off-road vehicles commonly drive along the bluff overlooking the beach. Should easy beach access be provided, it is conceivable that these vehicles might become a problem by disturbing vegetative cover and bluff soils. The opportunity for erosion and associated water quality problems in the ASBS would be enhanced.

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Parazoanthus lucificum	50
Plumularia sp.	shore to 40
Renilla kollikeri	20-40
Stylatula elongata	40
Syncoryne ? mirabilis	shore to 30
Tealia columbiana	60
Tealia coriacea	40
Zoantharia	20
Eudendrium californicum	shore to 40
Aglaophenia sp.	shore
Phylum Platyhelminthes: flatworms	
Thysanozoon sp.	20-40
Unidentified species	Intertidal
Phylum Sipuncula: peanut worms	
Themiste pyroides	shore
Phylum Annelida: segmented worms	
? Arenicola sp.	40
Diopatra ornata	40
Eudistylia polymorpha	40
Chaetopterus variopedatus	15-30
Phragmatopoma californica	shore
Salmacina tribranchiata	20-40
Serpulidae	shore
Spirobranchus sp.	40
Spirorbis sp.	shore
Halosydna johnsoni	shore
Phylum Mollusca	
Class Gastropoda: snails, abalone, and nudibranchs	limpets, sea hares
Acmaea pelta	shore
Acanthodoris lutea	40
Aplysia californica	shore to 40

Astraea undosa	60			
Chelidonura inermis	20			
Collisella digitalis	shore			
Collisella limatula	shore			
Collisella scabra	shore			
Conus californicus	10-40			
Crassispira semiinflata	30-40			
Crassispira sp.	60			
Cypraea spadicea	40			
Fissurella volcano	shore			
Flabellina iodinea	40			
Forreria belcheri	60			
Haliotis corrugata	40			
Kelletia kelletii	20-50			
Littorina planaxis	shore			
Littorina scutulata	shore			
Megasurcula carpenteria	60			
Homalopoma sp.	shore			
Lottia gigantea	shore			
Megathura crenulata	shore to 50			
Mitra idae	40			
Mitrella carinata	20-40			
Nassarius spp.	10-30			
Norrisia norrisi	40			
Nucella emarginata	shore			
Odostomia spp.	shore to 20			
Olivella baetica	20-30			
Olivella biplicata	10-20			
Opalia funiculata	shore			
Polinices sp.	60			
Petaloconchus montereyensis	shore			
Polycera atra	40			
Seila montereyensis	shore			

Serpulorbis squamigerus	shore
Spurilla oliviae	shore
Tegula funebralis	shore
Tegula eiseni	shore
Tegula gallina	shore
Thordisa bimaculata	40
Class Pelecypoda: clams, mussels, a	and scallops
Anomia peruviana	shore to 40
Chama pellucida	20-50
Ensis myrae	20-50
Hiatella arctica	20
Hinnites multirugosus	20-50
Leptopecten monotimeris	40
Lima hemphilli	30-40
Mytilus californianus	shore
Septifer bifurcatus	shore
Class Amphineura: chitons	
Mopalia muscosa	shore
Cyanoplax hartwegii	shore
Lepidozona pectinulata	shore
Nuttallina fluxa	shore
Class Cephalopoda: octopuses and sq	uid
Octopus bimaculatus	shore to 40
Phylum Arthropoda	
Class Arachnida: spiders and mites	
Acarina	Intertidal
Class Crustacea: barnacles, shrimp,	crabs, lobsters, etc.
Balanus tintinnabulum	20-40
Balanus glandula	shore
Balanus galeatus	40
Cancer productus	shore
Chthamalus fissus	shore

Ciro	lana harfordi	shore			
Ciro.	lana parva	shore			
Emer	ita analoga	shore		· ·	
Exci	rolana kincaidi	shore			•
Gamma	aridea	shore	to	80	
Hepta	acarpus pictus	shore			
Hepta	acarpus taylori	shore			
Hete	rosaccus californicus	(paras	siti	c on	crabs)
Hippo	olyte clarki	shore	to	5	
Idote	ea resecata	shore	to	40	
Idote	ea urotoma	shore	to	40	
Ligia	a occidentalis	shore			
Lysma	ata californica	shore			
Mysic	lacea	20			
Orche	estoidea corniculata	shore			
Pachy	ygrapsus crassipes	shore			
Pagui	cistes parvus	20-40			
Pagui	ristes ulreyi	20			
Pagui	cus samuelis	shore			•
Panu]	Lirus interruptus	50			
Paras	kanthias taylori	40			•
Petro	olisthes cabrilloa	shore			
Polli	cipes polymerus	shore			•
Pilun	nnus sphinohirsutus	shore	to	20	
Puget	tia dalli	shore	to	40	
Pylop	pagurus californiensis	20			
Pyron	maia tuberculata	80			
Scyra	acutifrons	40			
Phylum E	Bryozoa: moss animals				
Bugul	a neritina	20-50			
Hippo	odiplosia insculpta	40			
Liche	enopora sp.	20-40			
Membr	anipora membranacea	0-5			

Dhidalanana masifica	shore to 40
Phidolopora pacifica	shore to 40
Unidentified species	
Phylum Echinodermata	
Class Asteroidea: starfish	
Astrometis sertulifera	20-50
Astropecten brasiliensis	40-60
Linckia columbiae	40
Patiria miniata	shore to 40
Pisaster brevispinus	40
Pisaster gigantea	shore to 40
Pisaster ochraceus	shore to 20
Class Holothuroidea: sea cucumbers	
Parastichopus parvimensis	40-50
Class Echinoidea: sea urchins	
Dendraster excentricus	?
Centrostephanus coronatus	50
Lytechinus anamesus	60-80
Strongylocentrotus franciscanus	0-50
Strongylocentrotus purpuratus	shore
Class Ophiuroidea: brittle stars	
? Amphipholis sp.	shore
Ophioderma panamensis	shore to 40
Ophiactis simplex	40
Ophionereis annulata	shore
Ophioplocus esmarki	shore
Ophiopteris papillosa	40
Ophiothrix spiculata	shore to 40
Phylum Chordata	
Class Ascidacea: tunicates	
Cliona intestinalis	shore to 40
Clavelina huntsmani	40

	40 50
Metandrocarpa taylori	40-50
Pyura haustor	40
Styela montereyensis	shore to 40
Unidentified compound species	
Class Pisces: fishes	
Atherinops affinis (topsmelt)	0-10
Brachyistius frenatus (kelp perch)	20
Chromis punctipinnis (blacksmith)	20-50
Clinidae (klipfish)	Intertidal
Clinocottus analis (wooly sculpin)	Intertidal
Coryphopterus nicholsii (blackeye	
goby)	20-50
Cottidae (sculpins)	20-40
Embiotoca jacksoni (black perch)	20-50
Genyonemus lineatus (white croaker)	20
Gibbonsia sp. (klipfish)	0-20
Girella nigricans (opaleye)	0-20
Halichoeres semicinctus (rock wrasse)	20-50
Hypsurus_carvi (rainbow perch)	20-40
Hypsypops rubicundus (garibaldi)	20-50
Leiocottus hirundo (lavender	
sculpin)	40
Oxyjulis californica (senorita)	20-50
Oxylebius pictus (painted greenling)	20-50
Paralabrax clathratus (kelp bass)	20-50
Paralabrax nebulifer (sand bass)	20-50
Phanerodon furcatus (white perch)	20-40
Pimelemetopon pulchrum (sheephead)	20-50
Scorpaena guttata (poison sculpin)	20-40
Scorpaenichthys marmoratus (cabezon)	50
Sebastes atrovirens (kelp rockfish)	40
Sebastes carnatus (gopher rockfish)	20-40
Sebastes serriceps (treefish)	20
Syngnathus californiensis (kelp pipefish)	40

Class Aves: birds

Black-bellied plover (Squatarola squatarola)

Brown pelican (Pelecanus occidentalis)

Heermann's gull (Larus heermanni)

Spotted sandpiper (Actitis macularia)

Western grebe (Aechmorphorus occidentalis)

Western gull (Larus occidentalis)

Willet (Catoptrophorus semipalmatus)

White-crowned sparrow (Zonotrichia leucophrys)

Starling (Sturnus vulgaris)

Hummingbirds